

Winter Quarters Cemetery Gets A Facelifting



Pres. Elzo E. Porter, left, Winter Quarters Stake president; Cecil Fortner, high counselor, and Edward L. Wallace, stand near famed statue in cemetery.

OMAHA

Enlargement of the Winter Quarters Cemetery at Florence, Neb., a suburb of Omaha, to honor the

Mormon 2 forecloses sales from Missouri, is under way.

The priesthood in Winter Quarters Stake opened the cemetery improvement project after the Church had purchased two additional lots adjoining the cemetery which the Church now holds under a 99-year lease.

Irvin T. Nelson, director of Church landscaping, was sent to the Winters Quarters Cemetery to design the new landscaping and supervise the work.

"Church authorities wanted the park and cemetery to be at its best for Nebraska's centennial celebration," Mr. Nelson said.

He pointed out that this Winter Quarters location, where hundreds of pioneers sacrificed their lives after being driven from Missouri, is one of the most historic spots in Mormon history between New York and Salt Lake City.

The "Winter Quarters" monument by Avarad Fairbanks, portraying the death and burial of a child by Mormon pioneers, is considered one of the best pieces of art in the United States.

"I was faith-promoting to see the way members of the Priesthood rallied to do the work needed about the cemetery. Hundreds of workers were on the job," said Mr. Nelson.

"They cleaned and painted the steel fence. Stone work at the gates and all around the monument were cared for and polished. Rest rooms were painted by members of the stake presidency and high council. Flower beds were enlarged and the lawn area extended in addition to the extension of fencing around the two new lots purchased by the Church," he said.

City officials cooperated in every way with Church authorities. They consider the Winter Quarters Cemetery to be one of the most historic tourist attractions in the Omaha area.

Original grave markers were made from special stones brought in by the pioneers who traveling 10 to 12 miles up stream to find such rocks.

After coming west, the pioneers did not forget the cemetery but years later sent selected flagstones from the Park City area in Utah to make entrance gates on the east and west sides of the cemetery and to build a low wall around the monument.

The same spirit prevails with members of the Priesthood scheduling work on the cemetery starting Friday noon and all day Saturday. They began their project Aug. 11 and 12 and expect to have the enlarged memorial completed by Oct. 1.



Aaronic priesthood youths clear dead limbs near cemetery gate.



Stake members paint wrought iron gate in Winter Quarters.